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VIDEO

## Hugh Walker, 66, dies after fire destroys three homes in Hawthorne, Brisbane

The man killed in a Brisbane house fire has been remembered as a “great guy” who had recently come to the aid of neighbours during a similar tragedy. [WATCH THE VIDEO](#)

**Andreas Nicola and Samantha Scott**

3 min read August 21, 2023 - 11:44AM

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The man who died after being pulled from his burning Hawthorne house at the weekend had in a tragic twist helped neighbours during another fire in the same street.

Hugh Walker, 66, died in Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital overnight after suffering burns to 80 per cent of his body in the blaze that destroyed three homes on [Forbes Street, Hawthorne](#) on Saturday night.

6:18

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Emergency services battle the towering inferno that ripped through three houses in Hawthorne on Saturday night. Picture: Supplied.

The tight-knit community of Hawthorne expressed their devastation on Monday morning after hearing their friend Mr Walker had died.

Neighbour Peter Braat said he had known Mr Walker, a "handyman", for more than 30 years.

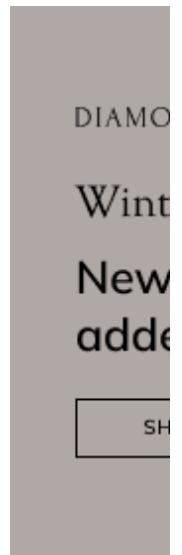
"He had a big heart and he was a great guy. And he was always the first one to help people," he said.

Mr Braat said Mr Walker had previously assisted with a fire in the street a few years ago.

"He put on his high vis shirt and took control ... with traffic and everything," he said

"Neighbours returned the favour and really tried to help him the other night."

Community chaplain Lance Mergard said it was a tight-knit community and that a lot of people knew Mr Walker.



Hugh Walker, 66, died after being pulled from a house fire in Hawthorne on Saturday night. Picture: Supplied

Mr Mergard said neighbours are struggling to deal with the “trauma” and the “long road ahead”.

Dramatic footage captured neighbours smashing windows and running into the fire to get to Mr Walker, who’d become trapped by the blaze.

They managed to pull the 66-year-old out of the burning house and on to the front yard where they poured him with a garden hose and rendered first aid until emergency services arrived.

6:18

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Peter Tarrant told 9 News that he rushed to the burning home after realising Mr Walker was still inside.

“I was asking (Mr Walker’s wife) ‘where’s Hugh, where’s Hugh’,” he said.

“She didn’t know where he was, she thought he was still in the house, so I approached the front door and Hugh basically came out, he was literally on fire.”



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Inspector Steve Newland said it was a “large and confronting scene”.

“Police have been advised that the neighbours did rescue the male who was engulfed in the fire,” he said.

“They obviously acted selflessly to try and aid the person and render first aid at the scene. It would have been very confronting and challenging for them.”

“It’s obviously very tragic circumstances for the families involved.

"It is a very tight knit community obviously emotions are high due to the extensive damage and the unexpected nature and the serious injuries of the male person."

He was treated at the scene for significant burns on over 80 per cent of his body before being taken to the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital where he was later placed on life support.

6:18



Investigators at the scene of the house fire on Forbes Street, Hawthorne. Picture: Lachie Millard

Two other men who tried helping, both in their 30s, were taken to the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital in stable conditions for smoke inhalation.

Insp Newland said investigations into how the fire started will continue on Monday morning.

"So far due to the extensive damage and the time it takes to investigate these matters, we haven't come to any conclusions at this stage," he said.

"We believe the occupant heard a loud bang from the rear of the property.

"Upon investigations the female occupant went into the kitchen at which time she saw smoke coming from the back of the dishwasher.

"She then saw through the window flames coming from the back of the home on the outside it would appear and at that stage the male occupant went to investigate and found a fire at the rear of the property."

Insp Newland said they would look at everything at the rear of the property including the hot water system.

He said they wouldn't rule the fire out as suspicious until investigations concluded.

"But at this stage it would appear as though it is non suspicious just due to the versions provided by the occupant the fire started at the rear," he said.

Member for Bulimba Di Farmer described Mr Walker's death as "desperately sad".

"It is desperately sad to know that Hugh Walker, a much loved friend and neighbour in our community, has lost his life after a house fire over the weekend," she wrote on social media.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with his family."

"Neighbours rallied while the fire was raging. This is what our community does."

"Today we hold our loved ones just that little bit closer."

A report will be prepared for the coroner.

Police are asking for anyone with information or relevant vision to come forward.

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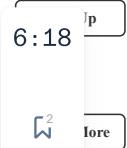
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2

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